**Graduation Ceremony discussion notes**

**November 13, 2012**

**Student Recognition Advisory Committee**

* Formal ceremony
* Culminating event
* Tradition is important
* Graduation Matters – this is clearly a value in MCPS, should we consider paying staff for participating in the ceremony?

**Dress**

* Ceremony participants wear robes
* Staff wear black robes and hoods consistent with their degree (if bachelors or no degree, wear MCPS collar which is gold)
* Student recommendation on footwear: clean, comfortable, have a heel connection to avoid tripping

**Music**

Recommended to be consistent:

* *National Anthem*
* Processional – *Pomp and Circumstance*
* Inspirational Interlude – all schools should have one that is performed by students

Okay to be individualized by school and from year to year:

* Recessional music choice
* Inspirational interlude music choice

**Seating (see diagram Sarah will create a diagram)**

Recommended to be consistent:

* Students ALL sit in alphabetical order (get student voice on where 4.0 students sit, e.g. in front row or with classmates, but once decided s/b consistent at all schools and from year to year)
* Faculty sits in front of the student section, in a separate section on one side; staff must RSVP so that seating section is clearly defined and each chair is labeled with staff member’s name
* Stage: Board of Trustees, Administrators, speakers (including student speakers, but they will go to their seats in alphabetical order to sit with their classmates when their speaking role is complete)

**Speakers**

Commencement Address:

* Chosen by students (through a process developed and worked by student government or other student organization; be sure to communicate final results to students)

Student speakers:

* Senior Class President
* Senior Class Vice President
* Other senior class officer or class member
* Three opportunities for student speakers:
  + Welcome and introduction of high school principal
  + Senior class speech, introduction of Commencement Address speaker
  + Closing and turning of the tassels

Other speakers:

* Superintendent: Presentation of the Class

**Graduation Program Notes**

* See Graduation Program Template
* Cover of program will be professionally printed in cardstock, with color images of student artwork on front cover; school and MCPS logos will be printed in color on the back cover
* Processional: *Pomp and Circumstance* (Staff lead students into ceremony during processional, students lead staff out during recessional)
* Color Guard ***if applicable***
* National Anthem: *Star Spangled Banner*
* Student introduction of the high school principal, includes a welcome to the ceremony (should be senior class officer such as president or vice president, or other member of the senior class)
* Principal welcome and introductions: includes introduction of all the people on the stage and the inspirational interlude
* Inspirational interlude: some form of musical performance by students, at least some are likely members of the senior class
* Senior Class Speaker: this is the traditional senior speaker (class president, vice president, other?); also introduces the Commencement Address speaker
* Introduction of Class Valedictorians: the principal will ask all valedictorians to stand and will list the names of each valedictorian individually
* Recognition of High Honor Roll: the principal will ask all students who have achieved high honor roll to stand and be recognized
* Medallions: each school will recognize students with a medallion; principal will provide a description of the meaning of the award and attributes/selection process (a written description will also be in the program)
* Presentation of the Class of 20XX
* Superintendent will speak and present the graduating class to the Board of Trustees
* Class Roll: a designated speaker will read the names of each member of the graduating class as they cross the stage to receive their diplomas
* Presentation of diplomas: members of the Board of Trustees will hand each graduate their diploma and if a medallion winner, will also place the medallion on the graduate and present the medallion winner with a personalized letter describing the award and why they were chosen
* Closing the Turning of the Tassels: a senior class officer such as the president, vice president, or other member of the senior class will stand before the graduating class to have students turn their tassels as a class (this is an area needing specific feedback from students – tassel turning together or individually after they cross stage and have received diploma?)
* Recessional: music chosen by each school/senior class; students will lead staff out

**Valedictorians AND Medallions**

**Rationale:**

* more opportunities for recognition creates more life-long opportunities for students (including access to higher education through admission and scholarships)
* by having more than one valedictorian and only one single, academic, qualifying factor, this will reduce the pressure and competition among students and encourage students to achieve even greater
* medallion winners do not have to be the perfect scholars, but can demonstrate other essential/desirable attributes allowing for students with a variety of backgrounds, skills, abilities, and character traits to achieve significant honors; this recognizes that grades are not the only important factor in learning and achievement

***Valedictorians***

* All schools will recognize EVERY 4.0 graduate as a valedictorian

***Medallions***

* All schools will recognize medallion winners
* Approximately 10% of the senior class will receive this honor (could be a few more or a few less, but ALL recipients need to clearly demonstrate the attributes to receive the award to maintain it’s value as a significant honor)
* A school level committee will determine recipients annually
* Medallion winners will remain confidential until the award is bestowed upon them as they cross the stage during the graduation ceremony
* The committee will write personalized letters to each recipient describing the award and the reason the individual was chosen to receive the award; specific personal attributes and examples where the student demonstrated those attributes; letters will be handed to students when they receive diploma
* Nomination process will include opportunity for staff to describe student attributes and examples
* To help inspire and motivate students to achieve this significant honor, attributes and description of the award and attributes will be shared well in advance and often with students, parents, and staff
* Attributes include: leadership, service, character, scholarship (look at student outcomes in *21st Century Model of Education*); looking for a well-rounded student/citizen
  + ***Possible attributes:***
    - Leadership
    - Service
    - Scholarship
    - Perseverance and problem solving
    - Creativity and Innovation
    - Communication and Collaboration
    - Independence and Self-Reliance